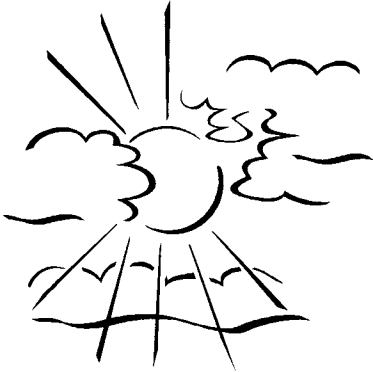


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Articles in Today's Clips

Wednesday, November 2, 2005

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November 1, 2005

U.P. jobless rate improves

By LINDA LOBECK

Iron Mountain Daily News Staff Writer

IRON MOUNTAIN — Unemployment declined to 5.1 percent in September in the Upper Peninsula, down from 5.4 percent in August according to the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

"The September seasonally unadjusted jobless rate edged downward in 11 out of the 15 U.P. counties and the decreases ranged from 0.2 to 1.5 percentage points below August. Of the four remaining counties, Mackinac was up by 0.4 percentage points and three counties were unchanged," noted Kathy Salow, U.P. analyst in Marquette. Dickinson County's jobless rate fell slightly to 4.5 percent from 4.7 percent in August. The rate a year ago was at 5.4 percent.

The civilian labor force for Dickinson County totals 14,675 for September with 14,000 employed and 675 unemployed.

Iron County's unemployment rate remained steady at 5.2 percent for both August and September, down from 5.7 percent a year ago.

The civilian labor force for September in Iron County totaled 5,950 with 5,650 employed and 300 unemployed.

"Jobless rates for 13 Upper Peninsula counties are down from a year ago. The declines range from 0.1 to 2.8 percentage points, averaging 0.4 percentage points for the entire Upper Peninsula region," Salow said.

She added that the unemployment rate in Houghton County was unchanged and the Mackinac County rate is 0.3 percentage points higher over the year.

The lowest rate recorded in the U.P. in September was 3.2 percent in Mackinac County and the highest rate was 8.7 percent in Baraga County.

Posted: 11-1-2005

Mason County's jobless rate improves again

By KEVIN BRACISZESKI

Ludington Daily News Staff Writer

Mason County's unemployment rate was again lower than the state average during September, and state estimates show there are 223 more residents working than there were a year ago.

Michigan Department of Labor and Economic growth also estimated that Mason County's unemployment rate of 5.8 percent for September was again below the state average, which was 5.9 percent.

In fact, Mason County's rate has been below the state average during each of the last four months, with rates of 5.8 percent, 5.9 percent, 6.8 percent and 6.6 percent, compared to the corresponding state rates of 5.9 percent, 6.3 percent, 7.6 percent and 6.9 percent.

Bill Kratz, executive director of the Mason County Economic Development Corp., is pleased with the latest figures.

"It's certainly trending in the right direction," he said. "Last year for September we were in 69th place among Michigan's 83 counties."

Today, Mason County is listed in 48th place.

Last year's September unemployment rate was estimated at 7.3 percent. State figures show the number of people in Mason County's labor force fell by 16 since September 2004, while the number of people working grew by 223 people, and the number of unemployed people fell by 239.

"What's probably occurred here is that some of the labor force numbers from last year were on layoff, and either they may have gotten jobs, or perhaps they have moved out of the area," Kratz said.

September's numbers for Mason County also show improvement over the August estimates.

The comparisons show there were 15,667 residents in the labor force during August, with 14,749 working and 918 jobless for an unemployment rate of 5.9 percent. The September numbers show a labor force of 15,299, representing a decrease of 368; with 14,413 working, representing a decrease of 336; and 886 jobless, representing a decrease of 32.

Kratz said the local area traditionally loses members of its labor force during September as local college students return to school in the fall.

"It's a classic pattern," he said, "a bell curve with the highest employment in the summer as we gear up for the tourism market and agriculture. That is relatively consistent year to year."

The monthly unemployment rates for Mason County so far in 2005 are 11.1 percent in January, 11 percent in February, 10 percent in March, 7.7 percent in April, 7.3 percent in May, 6.6 percent in June, 6.8 percent in July, 5.9 percent in August and 5.8 percent in September.

Unemployment figures for other area counties show:

- Manistee County — A labor force of 12,004, up 41 from September 2004; a number for working residents of 11,253, up 135 from 2004; a number of jobless residents at 751, or 94 less than 2004; and an unemployment rate of 6.3 percent, compared to 7.1 percent in September 2004.
- Oceana County — A labor force of 13,823, up 214 from September 2004; a number for working residents of 12,964, up 244 from 2004; a number of jobless residents at 859, or 30 less than 2004; and an unemployment rate of 6.2 percent, compared to 6.6 percent in September 2004.
- Lake County — A labor force of 4,385, down 96 from September 2004; a number for working residents of 4,054, down 36 from 2004; a number of jobless residents at 331, or 60 less than 2004; and an unemployment rate of 7.5 percent, compared to 8.7 percent in September 2004.

The Lake County figures do not include any impact from the closing of the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility in Baldwin. That facility was open in September.

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HOWELL

Michigan Works! is on the move

The Michigan Works! Livingston Service Center is moving from the Promenade Mall in Howell to the Livingston Regional M-TEC. M-TEC is at 1240 Packard Drive in the Trans West Industrial Park in Howell. The center will be closed Nov. 11 for Veterans Day and will reopen Nov. 14 at M-TEC. The Center's phone number will remain (517) 546-7450.

JEFF GERRITT: Teen lifers deserve at least a chance at parole

November 1, 2005

BY JEFF GERRITT
FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

Michigan practically leads the nation in unemployment, obesity and sending children to prison for natural life. State legislators can't do much about job or weight loss, but they can fix a system that has locked up more than 300 juveniles for life. For starters, they can pass a bill offered by state Sen. Liz Brater, D-Ann Arbor, that would give these offenders a shot at a second chance.

I hope Brater can take a punch and throw-down, because she's in for a street fight. Some prosecutors and politicians will give her the soft-on-crime tag, even though her bill would not release one prisoner.

Juveniles could still get sentenced to life with parole, and they would have to serve at least 15 years before they were eligible for release.

Even then, parole board members can say no -- and probably will.

They've had plenty of practice.

Brater's bill would still fix the worst legal problems. In Michigan, judges are forced to give some kids as young as 14 the maximum adult penalty for convictions in first-degree murder cases: life without possibility of parole. The law goes against science, legal tradition and common sense. Brain-imaging research shows the obvious: Teenage brains are more impulsive and unstable than adult brains -- even without the abuse and neglect that many of these young people have faced. Juveniles don't have the same legal rights and responsibilities as adults because they lack the maturity and judgment to handle them. That's partly why the U.S. Supreme Court threw out the juvenile death penalty.

Michigan's use of adult court, sentencing and prisons for juveniles has earned it a thumbs-down from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan. Two-thirds of those inmates are African American, though blacks make up only 12% of the population. Some serve life sentences for aiding and abetting -- harsher sentences than the actual killers got. At least a few have taken up space in Michigan's crowded and costly prison system longer than they've needed to.

Henry Hill Jr. of Saginaw was too young to vote or buy cigarettes when he was sentenced to life for murder. In a court-ordered evaluation, a

psychologist called the 16-year-old mentally deficient, insecure and unable to tell right from wrong. His report says Hill had the education level of a third-grader and mental maturity of a 9-year-old.

Hill didn't kill Anthony Thomas, but prosecutors argued that he planned the murder with his cousin, Larnell Johnson, then 18, who shot Thomas repeatedly during a fight at Wickes Park in Saginaw on July 16, 1980. (Johnson is also doing a mandatory life sentence.)

Witnesses, including an off-duty sheriff's deputy, said Hill was running from the scene when the victim was shot. Before he bounced, Hill fired six shots in the air.

"I was trying to scare people away," Hill, now 41, told me last week in the visiting room of Saginaw Correctional Facility. "If I had meant to kill him, I would have shot at him, not straight up in the air."

Hill has already served nearly 25 years -- most of his life -- in prison. In a way, prison may have saved him, but for what? The 16-year-old who had been labeled mentally deficient is now a bright, articulate and well-read young man who educated himself, earned a GED and took college courses in prison.

"I was young and stupid when it happened," he said. "The brother lost his life, and I lost mine."

As chairman of the Judiciary Committee, state Sen. Alan Cropsey, R-DeWitt, will have a lot to say about whether Hill can reclaim the life he has worked to rebuild. Cropsey, relatively reasonable on many corrections issues, told me he was open to taking a look at Brater's bill. But he also threw the matter back at Gov. Jennifer Granholm and the State Parole Board. If there's a problem with the system, he said, they should be willing to commute certain sentences.

That makes less sense than it sounds. Commutations are actions of last resort. They deal with individual cases in extraordinary circumstances. They don't fix a systematic problem in how juveniles are sentenced under state law, especially when Granholm, like many other governors, practically refuses to use the power.

Only legislators can change this unjust and unforgiving system, if they have the courage and wisdom to do it.

A lot of people, including me, are waiting to be surprised.

JEFF GERRITT is a Free Press editorial writer. Contact him at gerritt@freepress.com, 313-222-6585, or in care of the editorial page.

Bush Announces Plan to Prepare for Flu Epidemic

By GARDINER HARRIS
The New York Times

Published: November 2, 2005

WASHINGTON, Nov. 1 - President Bush announced Tuesday that he would ask Congress for \$7.1 billion to prepare the nation for the possibility of a worldwide outbreak of deadly flu. Most of the money would be spent on research and a national stockpile of vaccines and antiviral drugs. "Our country has been given fair warning of this danger to our homeland and time to prepare," Mr. Bush said. "It's my responsibility as the president to take measures now to protect the American people."

Mr. Bush made his announcement in a speech at the National Institutes of Health, in nearby Bethesda, Md., before an audience that included six cabinet secretaries and the nation's top health care officials. He spoke for nearly 28 minutes and gave a detailed summary of the history and risks of flu pandemics.

"A flu pandemic would have global consequences," he said as he jabbed his lectern, "so no nation can afford to ignore this threat, and every nation has responsibilities to detect and stop its spread."

In the wake of the government's poor response to Hurricane Katrina, the Bush administration has been at pains to reassure the country that it is taking seriously the threat of a pandemic flu, which some experts see as the next calamity that could befall the United States.

But in the Senate, where a measure to spend \$8 billion on pandemic flu preparations passed on a vote of 94 to 3 last week, Democrats immediately criticized the president's plan Tuesday as inadequate. One of them, Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts, said Mr. Bush's proposal "needs to be stronger," and called for more spending to ensure that hospitals and other health care facilities have the capacity to handle a flood of patients. Another, Senator Charles E. Schumer of New York, said the president's plan did not envision buying enough Tamiflu, an antiviral drug, to protect the United States.

The Senate Republican leader, Bill Frist of Tennessee, praised Mr. Bush.

"The president's bold and decisive leadership today reflects his understanding of the urgency of confronting this issue," Mr. Frist said.

The chief government spending under the president's plan would be \$2.8 billion for researching more reliable and faster ways to produce vaccines, \$1.2 billion to buy 20 million doses of a vaccine against the current strain of avian flu (the choice of who would have priority for the vaccine is a decision not yet final) and \$1 billion to buy the antiviral medications Tamiflu and Relenza.

Concerns about pandemic flu have intensified in recent years with the spread of a deadly avian flu strain among birds in Asia that has decimated entire flocks. This bird flu has infected about 120 people and killed 60. But the virus has yet to pass easily among humans, as is necessary to create a pandemic. Experts debate whether it ever will, but most believe that a pandemic flu someday is inevitable.

Pandemic flu has struck the nation three times in the last century. The first occasion, and the worst, was in 1918, when 500,000 people in the United States and 20 million worldwide died of what has since been identified as an avian flu. But a pandemic flu could also result from unexpected genetic changes to the seasonal human flus that circle the globe and already cause about 36,000 deaths a year in the United States.

The familiar flu shot - "I had mine," Mr. Bush said in his speech - prevents seasonal flu or eases its symptoms. The president's plan would end frequent shortages of seasonal flu shots while also preparing for a wider, more lethal flu outbreak, officials said.

Top public health officials who attended the president's speech praised the administration's efforts.

"This is a historic day in public health," said Dr. Julie L. Gerberding, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "We have worked for more than a decade to put influenza on the table, and now the president and leaders of Congress are completely engaged."

Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said the presence of so many top government officials at the gathering demonstrated how seriously the administration was taking the risks of pandemic flu. Dr. Fauci said the president had been personally involved in the plan's development.

Administration officials described Mr. Bush's speech as an overview of a broad effort involving at least seven government departments. Still, \$6.7 billion of the \$7.1 billion proposed appropriation would go to just one of them, the Department of Health and Human Services.

Michael O. Leavitt, secretary of health and human services, will unveil the final version of his agency's pandemic flu plan, a document more than a decade in the making, during Congressional testimony on Wednesday.

According to a draft of that plan, obtained recently by The New York Times, the nation is woefully ill prepared for a flu pandemic. Were one to occur, it says, hospitals would be overwhelmed, riots would engulf vaccination clinics, and even power and food would be in short supply.

The draft does not specify how troops might be used and who would be in charge under various circumstances - crucial decisions that bedeviled the response to Hurricane Katrina.

Administration officials have said that such operational decisions will be made in the coming months through cooperation among cabinet secretaries.

In written remarks that Mr. Leavitt is to deliver Wednesday on Capitol Hill, he says cooperation among federal, state and local governments will be crucial in the event of a pandemic.

"For example," he says, "the federal government can deliver stockpiles of medication and supplies to a city in the U.S. in a matter of hours, but it is distribution at the state and local level that defines victory."

"Over the coming days," Mr. Leavitt's testimony says, "I will be asking the governors, mayors, and state and local health and preparedness officials to join me in a concern we all must share - preparing for a pandemic should one happen. Everyone in society has a role."

"This arrangement will also ensure a more coordinated intergovernmental approach," the secretary says, "in the acquisition of antiviral drugs and predeployment stockpiles of antivirals around the nation."

The federal government will even rely on state and local governments to pay 75 percent of the costs to buy 31 million of the 81 million courses of antiviral medications that will be part of the national stockpile, according to the secretary's testimony.

The president said in his speech that he would ask Congress to grant vaccine makers liability protections, which the industry has sought for decades.

The industry already enjoys such protections for vaccines produced for children, and they are essential, Mr. Leavitt says in his prepared testimony, to enable flu vaccine manufacturers to increase capacity enough to meet a goal the administration has set for 2013: being able to deliver 600 million doses against any newly discovered strain within six months of an outbreak.

End of the goodies on Uncle Sam's tab

Wednesday, November 02, 2005

Earlier this month, voting on a bill sponsored by U.S. Rep. Nathan Deal, R-Ga., Congress finally fired the shot heard around the National Libido. In a move expected to save taxpayers \$690 million over five years, Congress ended federal Medicaid payments for Viagra.

Well, not just Viagra. This measure ends federal subsidies for any sexual-performance drugs. If you aren't well tuned into the news, you may have missed this one a few months ago when it first came to light. Florida officials were embarrassed to learn that they had provided erectile-dysfunction drugs to 218 sex offenders over the previous four years. Most of the offenders had crimes against minors on their rap sheets. In New York state, 198 sex offenders had gotten the little pills since 2000.

Then came a revelation that began a hair-pulling trend among editorialists: States that had tried to cut the Viagra subsidies from their own Medicaid programs -- including Michigan -- found that the federal government wouldn't oblige. New York's letter of complaint to the feds prompted a slight policy change: Henceforth, states could withhold the pill from sex offenders.

(Michigan found only seven people on the state's Sex Offender Registry among the 300 Medicaid patients getting Viagra or similar drugs.)

As outrageous as the very notion of tax-funded Viagra for sex offenders is, we were not content merely to pull the plug on those characters. No, the bigger question has always been: Why should taxpayers subsidize Viagra for anyone? After all, the inability to have sex at peak-performance levels is not a matter of perform-or-you-die.

But Katrina has done what outraged editorialists failed to achieve. Congress is ending Medicaid payments for erectile-dysfunction drugs as of Jan. 1, 2006. Medicare payments will be ended for such drugs a year later. The action was taken to free up federal funds to spend on victims of Hurricane Katrina.

But here's something to watch: Under the legislation, states still will be free to subsidize Viagra on their own if they determine the drugs are medically necessary. But federal funds will no longer be allowed as matching grants.

Now, do we need to spell out our position on whether Michigan should continue subsidizing Viagra to the Medicaid or Medicare populations? Here it is:

Don't do it.

Never again.

No way. No how.

The Jackson Citizen Patriot

November 2, 2005

Emergency Support Team called in

By SARA ROBINSON
Alpena News Staff Writer

The Michigan State Police Emergency Support Team was called in to handle a domestic incident at Fourth Avenue and Campbell Street Tuesday after local law enforcement made repeated unsuccessful attempts to contact the perpetrator.

According to City of Alpena Public Safety Director Thad Taylor, police were informed of a domestic disturbance at 4:08 p.m.

According to a press release, The Alpena Police Department Responded to 1029 S. Fourth St. to investigate an assault complaint.

According to the victim and family members who had fled the home, the suspect had allegedly assaulted a 22-year-old house guest and threatened him with a weapon.

Believing the suspect still was inside the residence, officers surrounded the home. Law enforcement officials knocked on the door of the house, and attempted to contact the subject by phone, but had no response.

"Given the circumstances, we decided to call in the Michigan State Police Emergency (Support) Team," Taylor said.

Law enforcement officers established a perimeter around the house, evacuated surrounding residents and continued to gather information about the suspect.

But police later learned the subject wasn't home during the initial attempts to make contact.

The subject was apprehended around 8:30 p.m. when the subject returned to the house.

The suspect was subsequently lodged at the Alpena County Jail on one count of felonious assault. Other charges may arise once reviewed by the prosecutor, the press release said.

Taylor said the MSP Emergency Services Team was called in based on the best information available at the time.

Taylor said apprehending the subject was easier since a perimeter had already been established before he returned home.

"We're just extremely thankful everything turned out well," he said, Tuesday night.

The Alpena Police Department, the Alpena Fire Department, the Michigan State Police Alpena Post and the Alpena County Sheriff Department, The Huron Undercover Narcotics Team also were at the scene.

Wife gets prison in husband's death

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, November 02, 2005

By Paul Janczewsk

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Kathy O. Phaneuf said her husband, Ronald, was two different people - one who was loved by friends and relatives and another who called her a whore and threw beer cans at her.

But Ronald's mother, Peggy Phaneuf-Nevels, said there is only one Kathy Phaneuf - "an evil, evil person" who shot her son in a garage and left him to die.

Genesee Circuit Visiting Judge Thomas L. Brown, citing Kathy Phaneuf's "very strange behavior" in the homicide, sentenced her to 18 years to life in prison for her guilty plea to second-degree murder. He also gave her a 2-year sentence for felony firearms use.

The sentences were part of an agreement reached by the judge, prosecutor and defense attorney to obtain a conviction before trial.

Phaneuf-Nevels of Davison said she would rather the case had gone to trial. She wanted her ex-daughter-in-law to get a mandatory sentence of life in prison.

"But it's over now, and we can get some closure," she said.

Kathy Phaneuf earlier said she and her husband were arguing at their residence at 6275 E. Lapeer Road about 11 p.m. Feb. 19 as she was packing to move from the home. Relatives said Ronald Phaneuf, 49, had filed for divorce in August 2004 and obtained a court order giving him possession of the residence, which he had owned for 15 years.

He apparently grew tired of the argument and went to the garage, only to be followed there by his estranged wife, they said.

Kathy Phaneuf said she went in the house, grabbed her loaded .38-caliber revolver, returned to the garage and pointed it at him.

"I inadvertently shot the gun," she told Brown. "I didn't mean to hurt anybody."

At earlier hearings, witnesses testified she complained of emotional abuse from her husband.

Police previously had been called to the residence for domestic violence, and Kathy Phaneuf had filed for a personal protection order against her husband, but it had not been served.

Relatives said Ronald Phaneuf was a gentle man who showed no violent tendencies.

Michigan Report

November 1, 2005

HOUSE PASSES ANTI-TORTURE BILLS

Two bills that would make torture of another person a felony were passed by the House Tuesday.

The bills, HB 5268 and HB 5269, would make torture of another person punishable by life imprisonment or any number of years and a Class A felony.

The House approved the bills on a 105-0 vote. Earlier in the day, the bills were unanimously reported from committee.

Rep. John Espinoza (D-Croswell) had introduced anti-torture bills in July but HB 5065 and HB 5066 never saw action on the House floor.

On Tuesday, he stated support for the Republican package.

"Today, we are the voice for those torture victims," Mr. Espinoza said. "In their honor, I commend my colleagues for passing these bills."

Both pieces of legislation stemmed from an incident in Huron County where a man repeatedly asphyxiated his blind and diabetic wife by placing a plastic bag over her head. The man, also a paramedic, would then revive her.

The prosecutor there contended that because state law does not cover torture and since the woman survived each attack, her husband could only be charged with the lesser crime of vulnerable adult abuse.

California is the only other state to have a law against torture.

The bills were given immediate effect.

The Michigan State Police supports the legislation.

Michigan Report

November 1, 2005

APPOINTMENTS BY THE GOVERNOR

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND
TREATMENT BOARD:**

Princella Graham of Troy succeeds Shirley Mann Gray to represent persons with experience in an area related to the problems of domestic, Nathaniel Perry III of Flint succeeds Edward Sosnick to represent persons with experience in an area related to the problems of domestic violence, and Lore Rogers of Whitmore Lake is reappointed, all for terms expiring September 30, 2007. The appointments are subject to Senate consent.

MIRS

November 1, 2005

Domestic Violence Panel Appointees Announced

Governor Jennifer **GRANHOLM** recently made the following appointments and designations.

Domestic Violence and Prevention Board

Princella **GRAHAM**, of Troy, succeeds Shirley **GRAY**, whose term has ended, to represent people with experience in an area related to the problems of domestic violence for a term starting Oct. 28, 2005 and ending Sept. 30, 2007.

Nathaniel **PERRY**, of Flint, succeeds Edward **SOSNICK**, whose term has ended, to represent people with experience in an area related to the problems of domestic violence for a term starting Oct. 28, 2005 and ending Sept. 30, 2007.

Lore **ROGERS**, of Whitmore Lake, is reappointed to represent people with experience in an area related to the problems of domestic violence for a term ending Sept. 30, 2007.

Housing towers proposed for old Y site

Council hears plan for 12-, 14-story buildings

Wednesday, November 2, 2005

BY TOM GANTERT

Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

Two proposed buildings that would be among the tallest in downtown Ann Arbor appear to have the support of the City Council.

A developer pitched 12- and 14-story buildings at a meeting Tuesday as part of the redevelopment of the former YMCA site on William Street between Fourth and Fifth avenues. The development hasn't gone to the Planning Commission and could take six months or longer to get to council.

The proposal, called William Street Station, comes at a time when the city is still studying where to put its tallest buildings. This project carries an added incentive for the council: the taller the buildings, the more affordable that units will be for some of the city's lowest income residents.

"I think that is what we need to come to grips with in our downtown," said Council Member Joan Lowenstein, D-2nd Ward. "We will not get lower prices for housing unless we go higher."

Michael Jacobson, chairman of the developer, HDC LLC, told the council that eight-story and 10-story residential towers would sit on top of a four-story base structure on William Street. The project would offer 30 efficiency and 70 one-bedroom units on a tower on Fourth Avenue. There would be 90 rental units or 70 market-rate condominiums on a tower on Fifth Avenue. There would also be retail along William Street and the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority transit center between Fourth and Fifth avenues.

Seven of the nine council members present said they supported the tall buildings, some saying the buildings would ensure cheaper housing. A YMCA report showed that incomes of people currently living in 100 efficiency units in the old Y building averaged about \$11,387 a year.

"This is a population we have to provide for with reasonable rents," said Council Member Jean Carlberg, D-3rd Ward.

Jacobson said the developers will try to get tax credits from the state to help subsidize some of the affordable housing costs.

Mayor John Hieftje said he was undecided on the project, but would look at it favorably if he saw that it kept down the prices of the low-income housing.

Only City Council Member Bob Johnson rejected the idea. Council Members Chris Easthope, D-5th Ward, and Mike Reid, R-2nd Ward, were not present.

During the meeting, Johnson questioned Jacobson about changing the original proposal in May, adding three stories to the tallest building.

After the meeting, Johnson said approving the plan would "be a real setback for the city."

He said the larger tower will actually be 15 stories because each of the residential towers will have a penthouse.

"I think we are setting a bad precedent for downtown," said Johnson, D-1st Ward. "It's going to be very hard to deny a 15-story building to a private developer because the city has signed off on this 15-story building."

The city's tallest buildings are the 26-story Tower Plaza and the 18-story University Towers. After that, the Campus Inn is 14 stories. If built, the two residential towers would be the next tallest.

Tuesday's developments showed how far the City Council will go to ensure its most affordable housing stock stay within downtown. The city trumped a \$3.5 million bid from AATA to buy the site in 2003. The council was concerned that 100 affordable housing units wouldn't be kept downtown if the AATA built its new transit station there. The council wouldn't consider proposals that moved the 100 units of low-income housing outside the downtown.

Building heights have been part of a four-year community discussion. The YMCA redevelopment will now be a part of that.

Calthorpe Associates consultant Joey Scanga, whom the city hired to review its downtown zoning, has made a preliminary recommendation that the William Street/South Main Street area should have buildings from three to five stories. Yet, the Tower Plaza is 26 stories and just a few blocks east of the Y site. Calthorpe also recommended the downtown core/Liberty Street area, just one block north of the development, could go six stories and higher. Scanga said a city like Ann Arbor could have buildings as high as 15 stories.

"There is a lot to think about here," Hieftje said of the newest proposal.

Tom Gantert can be reached at tgantert@annarbornews.com or (734) 994-6701.

Habitat dinner, auction fundraiser set Saturday

LAPEER COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Wednesday, November 02, 2005

By James L. Smith
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The third annual Lapeer County Habitat for Humanity Charity Dinner and Auction is Saturday at the Country-Side Banquet Center, 596 S. Van Dyke Road in Imlay City.

Auction preview and cocktails are at 5:30 p.m., dinner at 6:30 p.m. and the auction follows dinner. Dinner is \$25 per person.

Semiprecious stones, a massage, artwork and more will be up for auction. Dinner will include chicken, Swedish meatballs, pasta, roasted potatoes, vegetables, salad and rolls. Entertainment will be provided by Ray Champion, keyboard vocalist.

To donate auction items or buy dinner tickets call (810) 664-7111.

No cold shoulder for those needing help

Julie Knauf

Escanaba Daily Press

November 1, 2005

ESCANABA - Increases in heat and utilities have many residents concerned they will need help staying warm this winter.

"Almost anyone that's in a low-income range is going to be affected," said Nancy Beck, family independent manager at Delta County Department of Human Services. This especially includes residents already eligible for cash assistance and other programs with the DHS and senior citizens dependent upon supplemental security income that may or may not receive social security.

The average residential natural gas bill in the state could increase as much as 46 percent, said J. Peter Lark, chairman for the Michigan Public Service Commission.

As a result, "electric rates have risen in our region in the vicinity of 10 to 20 percent based on normal rate increases and fuel rate increases because natural gas prices are up," said Upper Peninsula Power Co. spokesman Kerry Spees.

Cheap heat: Cobs of energy keep homes warm and toasty

Bay City Times Editorial

Wednesday, November 2, 2005

Just a few kernels of interest in recent years have exploded into cobs of enthusiasm this year for a homegrown fuel.

It's corn. It's cheap heat.

The reports coming in from those who have kicked the fossil fuel habit and converted to corn are amazing.

A Standish man said he heated his house all season recently for \$350 in corn. That's compared to \$2,000 using propane.

With already high natural gas prices predicted to soar even further this season, with heating oil at \$3 a gallon recently, with the cost of propane up there, corn is becoming a fuel of choice.

King corn.

It seems when people in the Midwest get perplexed about fuel prices lately, they're finding answers in the grain belt's staple crop.

Michigan Ethanol LLC in Caro is making fuel alcohol from corn. Not only can alcohol stretch a gallon of gas in cars and trucks, it could completely replace dead dinosaur juice as a fuel.

Once gasoline prices jumped past \$2 a gallon - remember \$3 a gallon? - the price of corn alcohol became competitive.

As a home-heating fuel, corn has any other alternative beat, hands down.

It's cleaner than wood, cheaper than anything pumped from underground and it's quickly renewable.

Less than half a year from raw seed to tall, dried stalk bristling with BTUs.

The idea of burning corn for heat isn't brand new. Some farmers in the Great Depression reportedly heated their homes with it when its price had crashed. The fuel crises in the 1970s rekindled some interest; the 1980s, too, saw increased corn stove sales.

Maybe the use of corn as a fuel will stick this time around, with people fed up with high, volatile fossil fuel prices and the messy world politics of keeping the oil products flowing.

For those wondering what all the fuss is about, consider a comparison from Penn State University:

One gallon of No. 2 fuel oil has as much heating energy as 22 pounds of shelled corn.

One gallon of propane equals 15 pounds of corn.

At 56 pounds, farmers were getting \$1.44 a bushel for their corn late last week.

Homeowners probably would pay more than that for their corn, but the price certainly would beat \$3-a-gallon fuel oil.

With this year's really good corn harvest in Michigan, the price of that grain, that fuel, is down.

If demand continues to grow for this food-cum-fuel, no doubt prices would rise.

That would be very good news for farmers.

You'd have to be a farmer, of course, to raise enough corn to market, but what other fuel can the average homeowner actually grow in the back yard?

From one golden grain to cobs of energy in one short summer.
Corn is the one, and probably only, truly homegrown energy source.
So, OK, corn probably won't solve all of our nation's energy concerns.
But this grain that Native Americans first tamed thousands of years ago sure looks like part of the solution.
Embrace our amazing maize.
Kiss our dependence on foreign fuels goodbye.

- Our View is the editorial opinion of The Bay City Times, as determined by the newspaper's editorial board, which includes the editorial page editor, the editor and the publisher.

Experts look into cause of baby's death

PUBLISHED: November 1, 2005

By Chad Halcom
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A murder trial set to begin today is on hold while court officials sort out whether medical experts can testify that the infant died of blunt trauma or "shaken baby syndrome."

Gary Wayne Lauzon, 31, faces a second-degree murder charge for what officials have called a "soft injury" brain trauma or "shaken baby syndrome" death last November of his 2-month-old daughter. He remains free in lieu of a \$25,000 cash/surety bond.

"This child sustained blunt force injuries from an event which caused subdural hemorrhaging and trauma," said Macomb County medical examiner Daniel Spitz, who conducted an autopsy on the girl shortly after her death. "There was also evidence of damage to both the optic nerves."

Lauzon is being prosecuted for a shaken baby syndrome case investigated by the Macomb County Sheriff's office arising from a Nov. 15, 2004, incident in Lauzon's Harrison Township home. The infant girl then died Nov. 23 as a result of the injuries.

Lauzon appeared in court Monday as prosecution and defense conducted a pretrial motion on the qualifications of medical experts who may testify in the case. But Macomb County Circuit Judge Edward A. Servitto, who had to conduct the hearing in segments around a slew of arraignments and other cases, ultimately rescheduled the hearing for Nov. 18 when he could not complete it. The trial is delayed until after that hearing.

Defense attorney F. Patrick Talab took issue with the absence of a doctor who apparently diagnosed some of the child's injuries, but was not called by the prosecution to testify at Monday's hearing.

"As an officer of the court, I rely on the word of the prosecution that the witness will be here," Talab said. "I have the right to have that witness here."

But Robert Merrelli, chief of homicides for Macomb County prosecutors, said Monday in court that he only assured the defense that the physician would be a witness at the trial -- not that he would appear for any pretrial hearings.

Shaken baby syndrome, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, occurs when an infant or toddler is severely or violently shaken. It often comes by damage to the neck and spinal cord, blindness or eye damage caused by ruptures in the optic nerve, as Spitz allegedly found in the Lauzon case.

However, the medical examiner also noted that the child suffered "soft injury" trauma -- or injury that is fairly obvious internally but does not have an outward sign of impact or force such as bruising or fracturing. These injuries are generally more consistent with striking a surface with some flexibility or give, or else violent shaking and jarring with no impact blows at all.

Judge Servitto must still rule on the qualification of Spitz and possibly other witnesses to give medical expert testimony in the trial, as well as some defense requests to suppress the autopsy photographs and produce a chapter of an as-yet-unpublished chapter in a medical text for which Spitz was a contributing writer.

Lauzon was allegedly alone and caring for the baby when the incident occurred last November, and transported the baby himself to Mount Clemens General Hospital. Due to her injuries, she was then taken later to William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak where she died from complications of her injuries several days later.

Lauzon and the child's mother have no other children.

Flasher gets 90 days in jail, treatment

Daily Mining Gazette

November 1, 2005

HOUGHTON - A 30-year-old man who exposed himself to children at the Houghton ShopKo will spend 90 days in jail before undergoing treatment.

Aaron J. Quillman, of Houghton, was sentenced Monday in Houghton County District Court. On Oct. 8, he was spotted exposing himself in the ShopKo toy section. He was arrested on Oct. 12 and charged with indecent exposure, a one-year misdemeanor. After three months in the Houghton County Jail, Quillman will receive in-patient treatment at the Birmingham Maple Clinic in Birmingham, Mich.

Quillman will also serve two years probation, and must register as a sex offender and write a letter of apology. In addition, he must avoid ShopKo as well as direct or indirect contact with minors.

Under the sentence, he will also pay \$650 in fines and court costs, along with \$20 per month in oversight fees for the length of his probation.

Military Custody Bills Move Despite Judge's Objection

Over the arguments of a 55th District Court Judge that the bills aren't needed, the Senate Judiciary Committee this afternoon reported out two bills that would bar courts from permanently changing child-custody decisions based on the active-duty status of a member of the military.

Specialist Joseph **McNEILLY** who testified in favor of HB 5100 and SB 0714, told the panel that after he returned from Iraq, the court had ended his 50/50 custody of his son and his ex-wife had full custody. The Friend of the Court told McNeilly he was a "bad dad" because he'd abandoned his child and full custody was awarded to the mother.

Prior to his active military duty, McNeilly and his ex-wife shared custody according to the specialist. Despite the fact that his wife had abandoned the child earlier, the two biological parents agreed, according to McNeilly, at his suggestion, to move to Grand Ledge where they could arrange to split custody 50/50.

Judge Rosemarie **AQUILINA**, of the 55th District Court, argued that in the case of McNeilly as well as in other cases, there is reason to consider a soldier's record when taking into account child custody questions.

Aquiline argued that McNeilly had purportedly told his son "there are 11 ways to kill someone, no one will mess with you on the playground because I will teach you these."

"He has a history of communications with his child that aren't appropriate," the judge said.

She went on to testify that in 99 percent of cases where military personnel return, their custody arrangements are restored to prior status by the courts. There are however, one percent of cases where something happens and the soldier has changed from his or her service experience, she said.

On the legislation itself, the judge argued that if lawmakers move forward, they're going to be creating a separate, second class of children — the children of military personnel. She suggested if lawmakers want to make a difference, they should look at the issue of child-support payments by active-duty military personnel.

On that front, she said soldiers get a "family allotment" but they don't forward it to cover child support commitments. As a result, soldiers get out and they're in arrears on their child support.

Judiciary Committee Chair Sen. Alan **CROPSEY** (R-DeWitt) said he plans to have the committee look into the child support question. He also responded that the legislation in front of the panel merely says you can't rule on permanent custody changes based solely on absence due to active-duty service.

The panel reported SB 0714, sponsored by Sen. Patti **BIRKHOLZ** (R-Saugatuck Twp.). SB 0714 would bar a court from making a determination of the best interests of the child based on a parent's separation from a child due to military service.

Also reported was HB 5100, sponsored by Rep. Rick **JONES** (R-Oneida). HB 5100 would stipulate that a motion for change of a child's custody filed during the time a parent was on active duty couldn't be acted on unless there was clear and convincing evidence that it was in the best interest of the child. HB 5100 was introduced in response to McNeilly's experience.

Michigan Report

November 1, 2005

SENATE PANEL MOVES BILLS ON MILITARY CUSTODY

Custody of a person's children could not be changed simply because a parent has been called into active military duty under two bills, HB 5100 and SB 714, that were reported unanimously to the full Senate by the Judiciary Committee. But the unanimity of the vote belied an intense discussion that challenged the truthfulness of the individual who precipitated the bills.

Under the bills, a parent's active duty status would not be a reason for a court to change a child's custody except on a temporary basis. When the parent returns from duty the custody arrangements will have to be restored to their status before the parent left.

If a motion is made on the parent's return from duty for a custody change, the time the parent was away cannot be considered as part of the judicial decision for a change.

The bills were prompted by the case of Army National Guard Specialist Joe McNeilly who said that the joint custody arrangement he had had with his son was changed when he returned from duty in Iraq.

Sen. Patricia Birkholz (R-Saugatuck) said there are as many as 30 similar cases in the state.

But 55th District Judge Rosemarie Aquilina, who is also a military lawyer and the judge advocate general for Mr. McNeilly's unit, said no changes were needed in law and making those changes would render military children second-class because they would not see the same level of protection as other children. She also charged that Mr. McNeilly was not truthful because he did not say that he had discussed such things as ways of killing of a man with his son.

War sometimes changes people, she said, and courts had to have the right of determining whether that experience means a change in parenting arrangements is in the best interest of the child.

REPORT NO. --, VOLUME 35

Michigan Report

November 1, 2005

CONDINO OFFERS MORE ADOPTION OPTIONS

Rep. Paul Condino (D-Southfield) introduced legislation Tuesday that would allow two unmarried people to adopt a child.

"Study after study shows the importance to children of maintaining a safe, loving home with two stable parents," Condino said in a written statement. "While it would be ideal to hope that all of those parents would be married to each other, many adults do not or cannot marry for a variety of reasons. Their children should not bear the legal burden of this decision."

Mr. Condino said that under the current law, non-legal parents are not able to make medical decisions for their child.

In 2003, the Michigan Department of Human Services reported 2,611 finalized adoptions through DHS offices and private adoption agencies. Approximately 14,000 children are in the foster care system today, of which 4,500 are available for adoption.

"We know that our opponents will be vocal, and that they will attempt to claim the moral high ground with proclamations about what truly constitutes a family," Mr. Condino said. "I introduce this bill today in support of all those parents in Michigan who work so hard for their children every day, but whose efforts are not legally recognized."

Area woman volunteers to help hurricane victims in Alabama

by Marcie Westover
Staff Writer

Tina Williams was one of many Barry County residents who volunteered to help those displaced by Hurricane Katrina in Mobile, Ala.

"I went to Mobile and worked on the disaster food stamp assistance program," she said.

Williams is a Family Independence Specialist at the Barry County Department of Human Services.

Williams worked with others to collect applications from people in specified areas, who were forced to re-located to Mobile. The program was coordinated through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Volunteers were asked for and Williams was one of 25 people from Michigan selected to provide assistance.

Barry County Department of Human Services Programs Manager Shaun Culp said, "We're all very proud of Tina for volunteering for this effort. She worked 12-hour days the entire time she was in Alabama, without many of the comforts we take for granted, and she did so without complaint."

He went on to state, "Her generosity reflects positively on DHS, Michigan, and Barry County. We're very grateful to have had some-one of her skills and compassion to assist so many people in need."

The people selected were from different counties and selection was based on seniority.

Williams headed down to Mobile Sept. 22, almost a month after the hurricane hit. She was among 300 volunteers trained for the program.

William said they interviewed people who were applying for the one time food assistance program.

The food assistance was for one month due to the disaster because so many people lost food, as power was out for a while.

"Basically, what we took a look at there income, and assets, versus the expenses they have due to any damage that the hurricane

Williams said many of the people she interviewed were very emotional in telling their story.

On the application people had to explain the expenses incurred due to the disaster, which included funeral expenses, food lost, paying for temporary shelter, moving and the cost to protect their property.

"Mobile wasn't hit as hard (by Katrina) as Louisiana and Mississippi, but there still was a lot of roof damage, a lot of fences, down, trees down," she said.

Many people brought in pictures to further illustrate the damage to their homes.

Even though people were moved swiftly through the program many still felt the need to arrive very early. She said there weren't any incidents, with the only issue being a fender-bender in the parking lot.

When Williams wasn't working 12-hour shifts in Mobile, she and the other workers stayed in hotel across from the city's civic center.

She said it was estimated they took in more than 52,000 applications during the five-day program.

While working in the area, Williams said the weather was very hot and muggy. Hurricane Rita was also a threat, with Mobile receiving some of the outer rain bands.

"So the first three days, pretty much any spare time we had in the hotel... was spent watching the weather channel," Williams said.

There was a big story when Williams was in the area with tornado warnings.

Also helping in the Mobile area were volunteers from the University of Alabama and AmeriCorps. Williams said one night they had an opportunity to drive to an area devastated by Hurricane Katrina. She said while there were in the devastated area of Bayou LaBatre, they could see the debris scattered everywhere, even in the dark.

Some of the chaos Williams saw were roofs blown off and boats from the marina up on land. There were still some businesses starting to clean up.

"We also saw where they were starting to rebuild," she said.

Williams had never been to Alabama before volunteering for the program.

"People were very grateful for the program," she said, "We got people in and out of there really quick, they were always amazed at how fast we could get them in and process their applications."

When Hurricane Ivan came ashore last year, the program didn't as move quickly, forcing people to wait in lines. This time around, the program had more volunteers and some experience to reflect on.

Most of the people Williams helped serve were from Alabama because the program had already been run in Louisiana and Mississippi.

Throughout the experience, Williams took pictures and kept a journal.

She said she made a lot of new friends volunteering for the program, and she would volunteer again in the future.

November 2, 2005

Living wage plan nixed

Chris Springsteen
and Andy Rathbun

The Battle Creek Enquirer

The possibility of a city-enforced minimum wage for some workers is over — for now.

The Battle Creek City Commission voted 6-3 against approving a "living wage" ordinance that would have set \$10.19 as the minimum wage paid to employees of companies receiving money from the city.

Vice Mayor Tony Walker and commissioners Steve Franklin and Ryan Hersha voted in favor of the ordinance.

Hersha, who introduced the ordinance two weeks ago, essentially waved the white flag before the commission defeating the ordinance.

"Two weeks ago, six commissioners thought it was appropriate that we at least consider this," Hersha said, referring to the six commissioners voting in favor of introducing the ordinance at the Oct. 18 meeting. "It's clear to me that in the past two weeks things have changed. I can count, and there are not enough

votes on this commission for living wage to pass."

However, he said he will not stop pushing for a living wage, regardless of the outcome of next week's city commission election.

"Though we're not going to have a living wage ordinance adopted tonight, eventually we will," he said.

At the commission meeting, resident opinion was split nearly 50-50 with the issue of morality often invoked by those supporting the wage, while those opposed generally adopted a more economic stance.

Battle Creek resident Martin Munn, 51, president of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union Local 374, was for it.

"All we're asking is any company pay a fair wage for a fair day's labor," Munn said, "just to get (workers) above the poverty level."

He didn't believe local businesses would be negatively affected by the wage increase.

"They don't hire employees to make a loss," he said.

"They hire to make a profit. ... Living wage is the moral and right thing to do."

Doyle Hayes, president and chief executive officer of the plastics company Pyper Products, was against the living wage.

"Businesses like mine wouldn't have located in Battle Creek if I'd known

some outside force would dictate what I pay my people," Hayes said, noting he already pays his workers above the level proposed under the "living wage."

Mike Gallagher, 50, owns the Battle Creek-based company Gallagher Uniform. He said he was "totally against it.

"Our company has grown along with the growth of companies that have come into Battle Creek," Gallagher said. "This will stop that growth."

Retiree Forrest Powers, 74, said he would not be directly affected by the living wage. Nonetheless, he said he strongly supported it.

"Young people today, they don't stand a chance," Powers said. "They can't afford medical. They can't afford anything."

"Most of these people live on \$7 an hour," Powers said. "Do you think you could live on \$7 an hour?"

Chris Springsteen covers Battle Creek City Hall and Emmett Township.

Andy Rathbun can be reached at 962-3380 or arathbun@battlecr.gannett.com.

Appeals court halts ruling on same-sex benefits

Tuesday, November 1, 2005

Associated Press

LANSING -- The Michigan Court of Appeals temporarily halted a ruling Monday that allowed governments and public universities, including the city of Kalamazoo, to provide health insurance to the partners of gay employees.

The dispute goes back to Michigan voters' approval almost a year ago of a constitutional amendment that made the union between a man and a woman the only agreement recognized as a marriage ``or similar union for any purpose."

The American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan sued, and Ingham County Circuit Judge Joyce Draganchuk ruled in late September that public-sector employers can offer domestic-partner benefits without violating the amendment.

Republican Attorney General Mike Cox is now appealing that ruling and had asked the appeals court to delay Draganchuk's decision until the Court of Appeals decides the issue.

Cox and conservative groups argue that the constitutional amendment prohibited Kalamazoo and other public employers from providing same-sex benefits in future contracts.

A spokeswoman for Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm said Granholm was disappointed with the delay.

Health benefits also were included in labor contracts negotiated with state employees. Granholm put the benefits on hold while awaiting the ruling but now is asking the state Civil Service Commission to approve them.

The parties' legal briefs are due in early December.

``It's possible a decision could be reached by the end of the year," ACLU spokeswoman Wendy Wagenheim said.

The ACLU, representing 21 gay couples who filed the lawsuit over the issue of domestic-partner benefits, argued the stay does nothing to prevent the state or Kalamazoo from providing same-sex benefits because same-sex benefits were allowed before Draganchuk's ruling.